

Sadānirā

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Sadānirā, the name of a river, first occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (13.3.14-17) in connection with the story of a certain Māthava videgha. The story tells us that Agni vaivānara followed by Māthava videgha and his priest Gotama Rabūgana, travelling all along from the bank of the river Sarayū came to the river Sadānirā. The story explicitly mentions that the river Sadānirā formed the boundary between Kosala and Videha and says further that the people living in the east to that river were known as Māthavas.

‘सप्तर्षिः सप्तर्षिः सप्तर्षिः सप्तर्षिः सप्तर्षिः’

(*Ibid*)

The motivating idea behind the story appears to be to explain the etymologies of Videha and Mithila. As the river Sadānirā formed the boundary between Kosala and Videha, it can be identified only with the three rivers, namely, Sarayū, Rāpu and Gaṇḍakī. As Sarayū is very close to Ayodhyā, capital of Kosala, only the rest two remain to be considered. Eggeling (S.B.E. XII, p. 104) identified Sadānirā with Gaṇḍakī. Weber does the same (*Indische Studien*, I, pp. 172, 181). Several other scholars also hold the same view. But Oldenberg (*Buddha : His life, His doctrine, His order*, p. 398) and Pargiter (*Mahābhārata Purāṇa*, p. 294) identified Sadānirā with Rāpu. That the river Sadānirā was actually Rāpu will be clear from the following discussions. Before the proposed discussion is taken up the case of one more river for identification should be disposed of. In Amarakośa where some river-names are given, the following verse occurs—

‘सप्तर्षिः सप्तर्षिः’ (1.10.32).

This verse may be interpreted in two ways. Either they are two independent rivers or they are names of the same river. It is the second interpretation which commentators of Amarakośa have followed. On this basis Sadānirā was identified with Karatoya (*Imperial Gazetteer*, vol. 15, p. 24). As the river Sadānirā was the boundary between Kosala and Videha it cannot be identified with Karatoya, the river of North Bengal.

Before the Aryan penetration into India, the country was inhabited by the people who spoke Austric and Dravidian speeches. In the Himalayan tracts as well as in the eastern regions of India Tibeto-Burman speaking people had also settled. Naturally a large number of territories, hills, forests, rivers, and flora and fauna had their native names. New Indo-Aryan names came with the Aryans but a large number of old names continued simply because the Aryans had not ready made words with them for unfamiliar things found in a vast country like India of varying climates. A number of these non-Aryan names were Sanskritised while a few others which were translated into Sanskrit remained in use along with the translated ones and became their synonyms in course of time.

Saddānra is an explanatory word and as such is distinct among other river-names of the region, e.g. Sarayū, Hāhukā, Rāhāy, Gupphā and Kāuśikā etc. It is a compound of two words *sadā* = always and *nra* = water, the first being a Sanskrit and the second originally a Dravidian word. Thus the compound word Saddānra literally means, full of water. Sanskrit *saddānra* appears to be a literal translation of the original non-Aryan name of a river. It can not be Gupphā as it probably means a river whose water produces murmur in the desert which happens even now. Saddānra is more probably Rāpā in which 'r' appears to be a Tibeto-Burman word which means water or river. Alexander Cunningham in his *Archaeological Survey of India* (vol. XIV, 125) suggested that Tibeto-Burma 'T' occurs in a number of river names in the Trans-Satlej area, e.g. Rāwa-ti = Rāvi, Nyung-ti = Beas, Zang-ti = Satlej, Pāra-ti = Para river. According to Cunningham, it is the Tibeto-Burma 't' which has been Sanskritised in several names of rivers, e.g. Irāva-ti (and not Irā-va-ti), Gomā-ti (and not Go-mā-ti). Dr S. K. Chatterji (*Kirāta Jana Iti*, p. 43) does not accept this explanation in toto. However, he considers that there are really a number of river-names where Tibeto-Burma 't' may be accepted as the second constituent. Names like Dvādvaṇ and Gomati etc. should be considered as Sanskrit words because basal and suffixal parts in them are quite clear. But names Rāpā, Tapu, Kāmti etc. may be entirely Tibeto-Burman words or combinations of Austric and Tibeto-Burman word. The first part of Rāpā is not clear but it may have meant what is

meant by Sanskrit *sadā* (= always). Thus the identification of *Sadānirā* with *Rāpti* appears to be reasonable on linguistic grounds. This is corroborated by other evidences as well.

A verse in the *Mahābhārata* comes in handy as it makes distinction between *Sadānirā* and *Caplaka* :—

वत्सनी च वत्सलो न वत्सनी च त्वेव च ।

एव त्वेकेनैव वत्सलोऽप्युच्यते ॥

(2.20.27)

This verse was cited by Oldenberg in support of identification of *Sadānirā* with *Rāpti*.

There are two rivers known as *Rāpti*—(1) main *Rāpti* (western) and *Amhi Rāpti* (the eastern) or *Dhimsālā* (= *Dhavalā*) also known as *Bāhukā* or *Bahukā*. In Buddhist literature the main *Rāpti* is known as *Acīravatī* (*Digha-nikāya*, I, p. 206) or *Ajīravatī* (*Avadānasūtra* 1.65). According to the Buddhist literature the *Rāpti* is one of the five great rivers of India along with the *Gangā*, *Yamunā*, *Sarasvatī* (i.e. *Sarayu*) and *Mahā*. The river was notorious for its devastating floods. It is said that in one of its floods *Vijñānaka* and his army were swept into the sea (*Dharmapadamāhā* Kāśhā, 1.360). Destructions of crops have also been referred to :—

‘वत्स वत्स वत्स वत्सेभ्य’

(*Jātaka*, Fausbøll's Ed. 4, p. 167)

It is very difficult to pinpoint the place where *Māthava Vidyegha* may have crossed the river but it must have been a place along the well-known route.

According to the story as told in ŚBr. *Māthava Vidyegha* started his expedition from the bank of the river *Sarasvatī*. It is inconceivable that *Māthava Vidyegha* started from the bank of the river *Sarasvatī* for the pilgrimage of the land later named after him leaving all the territories inhabited by the unwarlike non-Aryan enemies. The Aryanisation of *Vidēśa* must have been preceded by the Aryanisation of *Kośala*. *Māthava Vidyegha* must have been a leader of an advance party of the *Kośalan Aryans*. Advance Party may have been, say, one thousand strong or even more than that. What was the route the party followed ? The southern route or the route by the left bank of the *Gangā* may have been difficult in crossing the various great rivers.

Besides, this route will be circuitous for the founder of the city of Mithilā. The party may have followed the northern route. In the time of the Bṛakha the highway which connected Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha passed through Śrāvastī, Kapilavastu, Kāśī, Rājagṛha and Vāṣṭī. Another highway connected Śrāvastī with Takṣṣilā.

It appears from the above discussions that the territories east to the river Rapti were Videha in ancient times. In the MBH the word gaṇḍakā in pl. signifies those Videhans who lived on the bank of river Gaṇḍakī :—

‘तस्यैव गण्डकाक्षुः विदेहान् वाचयन् ।’

विदेहान् वाचयन् गण्डकाक्षुः ।’

(2.29.3)

There are only two possible interpretations of the word Gaṇḍakā here. It may be an independent noun or it may qualify Videha. The second meaning is preferable as Gaṇḍakā does not occur elsewhere as an independent noun signifying a people. Thus ‘Gaṇḍakā videhā’ means ‘videhā people living on the banks of the river Gaṇḍakī’. Monier Williams (Skt.-English Dictionary) also gives the same meaning. It is reasonable to suppose that videhās lived on both sides of the river and not only on the eastern side.

In the MBH (5.5.12-13) the following four dvīpas are mentioned :—

1. Kuru or Uttarakuru in the north;
2. Jambū or Bhārata in the south;
3. Bhadrakṣya in the east, and
4. Ketumālā in the west.

In the Buddhist literature the third, that is, Bhadrakṣya and the fourth, that is Ketumālā have been substituted by pūrvavideha and apara Gōṣāna or Goyana respectively. Explaining the new term “pūrvavideha” D. C. Sircar observes,—“The name ‘pūrvavideha’ would mean ‘eastern videhā’ or more probably, ‘videhā’ in the east. It may be that the Buddhists preferred that name because the Buddha’s birth place which is one of the four greatest Buddhist shrines was situated in the ancient videhā country in eastern India” (Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, p. 19). It means the territories around Kapilavastu were once known as videhā whatever may

be the interpretation of the term 'pārva vidha'. One more suitable meaning of 'pārva' in 'pārva vidha' appears to be 'ancient'. It would mean that the land between the river Rāpi and the river Gaṇḍakī was once known as Vāḍha.

In the time of the Buddha there were a number of republics in the territories east to the river Rāpi. The Buddha himself belonged to one of them. Some republics formed a confederacy which was known as Vajjian Confederacy. There is a controversy regarding the number of the confederates whether they were eight or less than that. J. P. Sharma (Republics in Ancient India, p. 84) after discussing the matter at length gives the name of the following republics :—

"The Lichavis of Vesālī, the Vāḍhas of Mithilā, the Nāyas of Kusāpurā, the Mallas of Pāvā and Kusinārā and the Vajjā."

It is really remarkable that the whole confederacy was known as Vajji although the Lichavis were the most powerful confederate of all of them. The word Vajji is no less mysterious than the word Vidha. Both of them deserve special treatment and they will be discussed in an independent paper. That the Lichavis and the Nāyas were known as Vidhas is clear from the Pāli texts. This is also corroborated by the Jain text. The following statement occurs in one of the Jain texts :—

"In that period in that age the venerable ascetic Mahāvira a Jātī kṣatriya, Jātī-putra, a vidha, son of Vidhadattā, a native of vidha, a prince of vidha, lived thirty years among the householders under the name of vidha."

(Ācārāṅga Sūtra, 2. 15-17, Eng. tr. in S. R. E. XXII)

There is a controversy regarding the status of the Śākya: whether they were under the king of Kōśalā or they formed an independent republic. According to Mahābhārata the Śākya territory in 600 B. C. was under the Kōśalā king (Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names). This has been supported by a number of scholars, e. g., K. P. Jayaswal (Hindu Polity, p. 49), H. C. Raychaudhary (Political History of Ancient India, p. 43) and V. Panch (History of Kōśalā, pp. 33-40). The claim has been refused by R. S. Davids

(*Buddhist India*, pp. 17-21), R. C. Majumdar (*Corporate Life in Ancient India*, p. 235) and J. P. Sharma (*Republics in Ancient India*, pp. 182-186). There are really contradictory statements which have only confused the issue. The following address of the kind Prasenajit to the Buddha shows that the Buddha was a Kosalan :—

‘अवकाशं कोसलस्य मण्डपं कोसलस्य ।’

(*Majjhima Nikāya* II, p. 124)

But the statement—‘अग्रे अक्षिपुं निग्रवान् एव तत्राग्रे’ (*Jātaka*, IV, p. 152) shows equally that the Śākya territory just touched the border but was outside the jurisdiction of the Kosalan kingdom. The conclusion drawn by J. P. Sharma after weighing the arguments of both sides appears to be reasonable. He says :—

“That the Śākyas were extinguished as a political power by Viśuddhabha and that the survivors may have become Kosalans at a later time seems certain, but the source appears to have intermingled earlier and later events. The passages cited above impel us to suggest that the Śākyas were an independent political community during the Pasenadi's reign and the earlier part of Viśuddhabha.”

(*Republics in Ancient India*, p. 186)

One more significant point is the absence of the Kosalan king in the time of the death of the Buddha at Kusinārā when almost all the neighbouring states claimed their shares in the relics. The claimants were—king Ajātasattu of Magadha, the Licchavis, the Śākyas of Kapilavastu, the Bhattas of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Rāmāgama, Brāhmanas of Veṅṣāśāpā, Mallas of Kusinārā and Pāvas (*Digha Nikāya*, II, 3.20, 111-113). The claim of the Śākyas was the uppermost as the Buddha was the pride of the Śākyas (*Sattisettis*). The claim of all others except that of the Brāhmanas of Veṅṣāśāpā, was based on the fact that all of them were khattiyyas and the deceased was also a khattiyya. Besides being a khattiyya, Ajātasattu was also related to the Viśchvas on his mother's side as he was known as Viśchvaputta. The Nāyas and the Viśchvas probably were represented by the Licchavis. But the absence of the Kosalan king probably shows that he was not related to tribes to which the Buddha belonged.

There are striking similarities between the political institutions of the Lincharis and that of the Sakya. This is another proof which indicates that they were originally one.

All this shows that at the time of the Buddha almost all republican states east to the river Rapti had many things in common among them and that they were generally known as Vajjians.

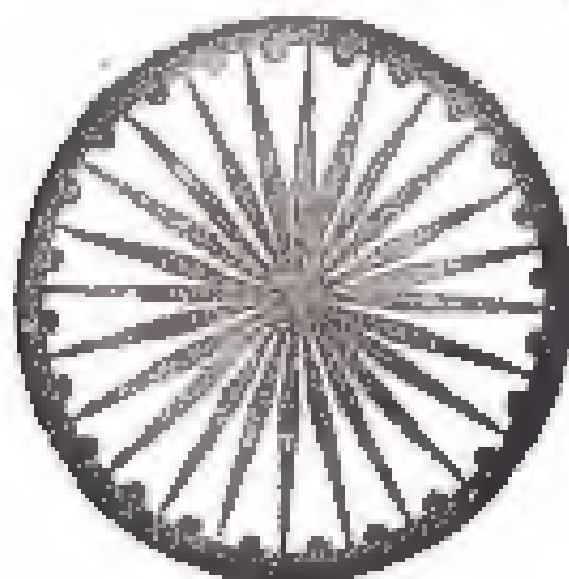
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